Local Needs Assessments: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Al Stein-Seroussi, Ph.D.

Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

Chapel Hill, NC

North Carolina MH/DD/SAS QM Conference
August 21, 2007

Workshop Objectives

Participants will (I hope) gain an understanding of…

- SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework

- The value of <u>good</u> needs assessments

- The foundations of a good needs assessment
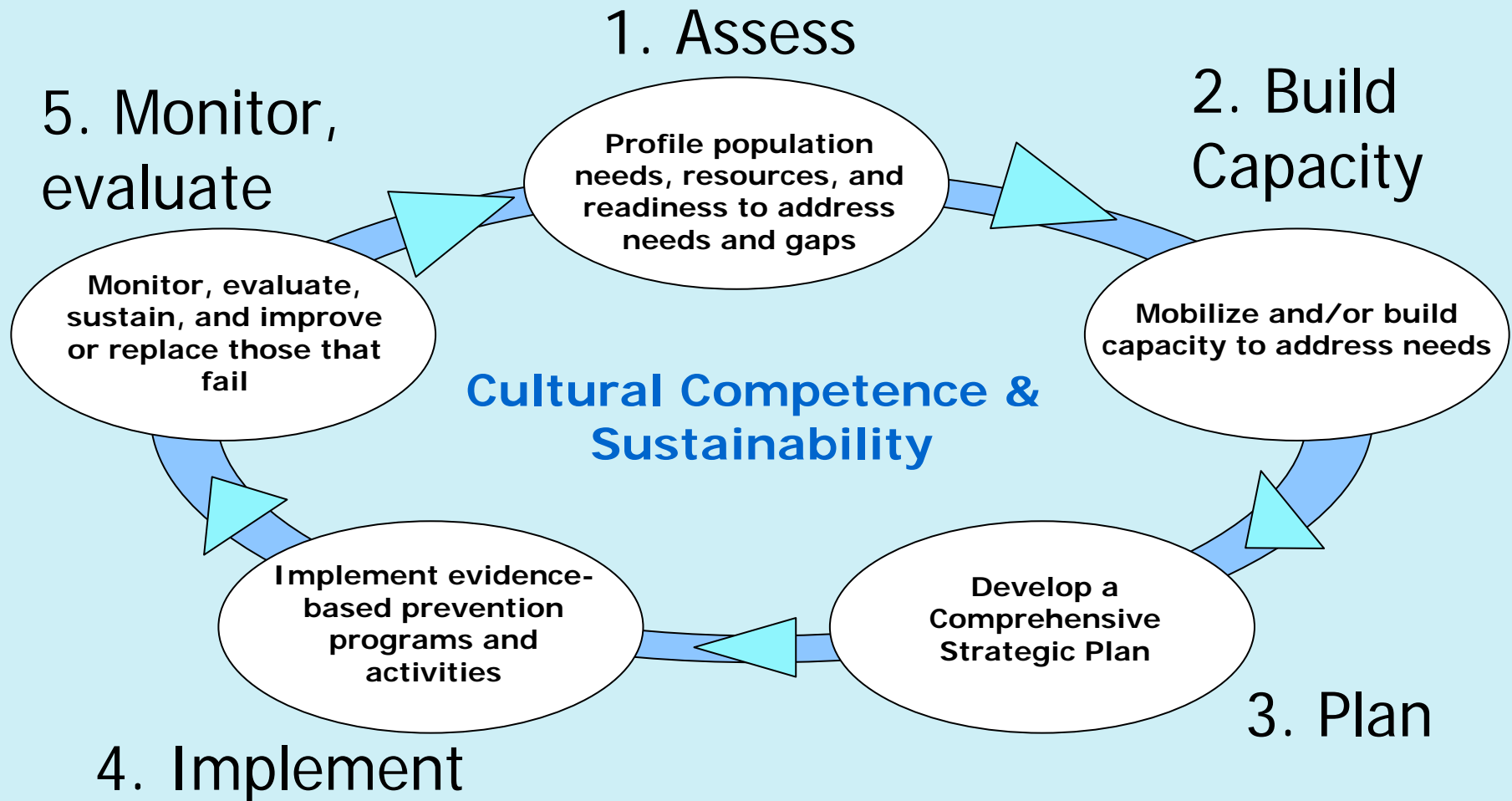
What is the Strategic Prevention Framework?

- SAMHSA-wide planning model for prevention

- Relevant for substance abuse prevention, treatment, mental health promotion, other areas

- Consists of 5 basic steps…

  – Needs Assessment
  – Capacity Building
  – Strategic Planning
  – Implementation of Evidence-Based Programs, Policies, and Practices (EBPPPs)
  – Evaluation and Monitoring

SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework
State and Community Levels

1. Assess

5. Monitor, evaluate

2. Build Capacity

Profile population needs, resources, and readiness to address needs and gaps

Monitor, evaluate, sustain, and improve or replace those that fail

Mobilize and/or build capacity to address needs

Cultural Competence & Sustainability

Implement evidence-based prevention programs and activities

Develop a Comprehensive Strategic Plan

3. Plan

4. Implement

Value of Good Needs Assessments

- You identify problems that need addressing

- You identify areas where the problems are most prevalent (geographic, subpopulations)

- You begin to identify the logic steps needed to address the problem (capacity, strategies, monitoring, etc.)

- You learn something about your community

Basics of a Good Needs Assessment

- Understand your purpose

    - Are you trying to understand the extent of a problem or trying to prioritize problems?

    - Are you trying to understand the causes/contributors of problems (i.e., problem is already identified)?

    - Do you have a service you want to expand to new clients?

    - Do you want to expand the types of services you provide to your current clients or to new clients?

- Identify a <u>manageable</u> set of logically connected constructs, indicators, measures (may be an iterative process)

- Identify reliable and valid <u>extant</u> data sources

- Identify sound and reasonable methods for collecting primary data, where necessary

- Organize data and spend appropriate time and energy interpreting the data.

Constructs, Indicators, Measures

Constructs

- Broad categories of issues (e.g., mortality, morbidity, crime)

Indicators

- Specific variables that exemplify the construct (e.g., drug dependence, suicides, alcohol-related traffic fatalities)

Measures

- The precise way in which the indicator is made known or is measured (e.g., NSDUH survey items, police reports)

Examples of Constructs, Indicators, Measures

Constructs	Indicators	Measures
Mortality	AR traffic fatalities	Rate of AR traffic deaths per 1,000 Rate of traffic deaths that are AR
	AR suicide	Rate of suicides per 1,000
	AR homicide	Rate of AR homicides per 1,000 Rate of homicides that AR
Health/ Injury	Alcohol dependence/abuse	Rate of population meeting DSM-IV Number of missed days of work Emergency room visits
	Cirrhosis	Rate of cirrhosis per 1,000
	AR trauma	Rate of head injuries per 1,000 Emergency room visits with AR trauma
	Fetal alcohol effects	Rate of FAS babies born per 1,000
	Domestic violence	Emergency room visits for dv assault
Crime	Alcohol sales to minors	Retail violations Juvenile arrest rates for purchasing
	DWI	Arrest rates for DWI Conviction rates of those charged
	Violent crime	Arrest rates for assault, robbery, etc Arrest rates with alcohol involved Reported offenses
Educational Disruption	Low academic achievement	Dropout rate GPA School bonding
	Discipline problems	Rate of AR suspensions/expulsions AR offenses

Potential Sources of Extant Data

- National, state, local surveys

- US Census Bureau

- US Department of Education

- FBI's Uniform Crime Reports

- NC DPI

- NC DETECT

- NC DJJDP

- NC DMV

- NC Administrative Office of the Courts

- Local Chamber of Commerce

- Local Law Enforcement

- Local Schools

- Local Hospitals

- Local Providers

Be wary of collecting too much data….
data are only useful if they will be used.

Methods of Primary Data Collection

- Local surveys with rigorous sampling

- Local surveys with convenience sampling

- Focus groups

- Interviews

- Direct observation of behaviors

- Compliance checks/purchase attempts

Be wary of collecting too much data….
data are only useful if they will be used.

Organizing and Interpreting Data

- Organize data in a useable fashion

  - Prevalence rates (how much?)

  - Severity of consequence (per unit)

  - Trends over time (increase? decrease?)

  - National/state ranking (high? low?)

- Solicit guidance from "experts" on how to interpret data (experts do not need to be Ph.D. epidemiologists)

- Remember your purpose for conducting the needs assessment when you interpret data

- Have an eye towards evidence-based strategies

Good, Bad, and Ugly

- A <u>good</u> needs assessment adds value to your work

- A <u>bad</u> needs assessment attempts to add value, but falls short because some elements were not successful

- An <u>ugly</u> needs assessment serves no purpose…it is an exercise that wastes time and money

Questions?

NC SPF SIG
Evaluation Contractor (PIRE)
Al Stein-Seroussi, Ph.D.
919-265-2616
stein@pire.org